A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LITERACY AND OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE OF SCHEDULED CASTE POPULATION IN BIRBHUM DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL

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Title of the Ph.D. Research Project: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LITERACY AND OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE OF SCHEDULED CASTE POPULATION IN BIRBHUM DISTICT, WEST BENGAL

Introduction: Education guides people in the right direction in their life. Education is the main driving force in making the individual ideal and aware. There are variations in social justice and equality in different countries around the world. In India, justice and equality are recognized constitutionally, but in real life, social divisions exist in various forms based on gender and caste. In a developing country like India, important issues like educational inequality, economic inequality, and social inequality emerge in different ways in different states of the country. People of various castes and religions live in India, according to Article 366 (24) of the Constitution, people belonging to lower caste communities are known as scheduled castes (dopt.gov.in., n.d.). The Indian social system has a hierarchical caste system. 72 percent of scheduled caste people in India live in rural areas, mainly in 7 states namely, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan (section - 10: Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes - nirdpr, n.d.). There is disparity in the average income of people belonging to upper castes, backward caste and scheduled castes and tribes, which is due to age-old unequal treatment. 16.6 percent of India's population belongs to scheduled castes. The people of this nation do not have their own wealth, land, about 71 percent of the people work as farmers and agricultural laborers. Scheduled castes and tribal people are subjected to extreme deprivation. (Raghavendra, 2020).

According to the directive principles of state policy in Article 46 of the Indian Constitution, it is mentioned that taking special measures for scheduled castes and tribes people "The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation" (Nic, L. P. n.d.)

India scheduled castes population

India Scheduled Castes population	Percentage
India	16.63
West Bengal	23.51
Birbhum	21.60

Source: 1. (*Handbook on SOCIAL WELFARE STATISTICS - Social Justice*, 2018)
2. (*SERIES-20 PART XII-A - Westbengal.census.gov.in*, 2011)

India 16.63 percent, West Bengal 23.51 percent, 21.60 percent of scheduled caste people live in Birbhum district.

Education rate of schedule caste population

Education rate of Schedule caste population	Percentage
India	66.1
West Bengal	23.51
Birbhum	29.50

Source: 1. (*Handbook on SOCIAL WELFARE STATISTICS - Social Justice*, 2018)
2. (*SERIES-20 PART XII-A - Westbengal.census.gov.in*, 2011)

The following is the education rate of the Scheduled Caste in India: 66.1 percent of scheduled caste people in India are literate; 23.51 percent of scheduled caste people are literate in West Bengal state; and 29.50 percent of scheduled caste people are educated in Birbhum district of West Bengal state. Employment is necessary for human life. The mainstay of Employment Birbhum district in West Bengal state is agriculture and small-scale industries, which are held by the scheduled caste people, which are very few in quantity.

According to NITI Aayog information, some districts are lagging behind in terms of education, economic and work opportunities, and infrastructure in the country, among which Birbhum district in the West is named in this list. The North West has an estimated population of 9 crore, of which 22 percent are scheduled tribes. The districts with the largest population of scheduled castes are South 24 Parganas, Malda, Bankura, Birbhum, Cooch Behar, and East Burdwan.

Scheduled caste people in this district are employed as main workers, marginal workers and non-workers. A main worker is a citizen who works for 183 days in a year, and a marginal worker is a citizen who does not work for a certain period of time in a year. According to the 2011 census data in Birbhum district, 26.6 percent are associated with the main workers, 11.96 percent are marginal workers and 61.98 percent are associated with non-worker (S&M Volume 5: Population Censuses, n.d.)

In West Bengal Birbhum district is known as 'Rarh' and this district is referred to as 'Vajjabhum'. Birbhum district is bordered by Jharkhand state in the north-west, Murshidabad in the east, and Burdwan in the south (*about District*, n.d.). According to the 2011 census, Birbhum district has three sub divisions (Suri, Bolpur, Rampurhat), 19 blocks, 18 police stations and 2455 villages. Birbhum district ranks 10^{th} in terms of the population of scheduled castes. In the present study, the data will be collect on literacy and occupational structure, educational status, employment opportunities in the formal and informal sectors, social status and family income of the scheduled caste population of Birbhum district to investigate the relationship of these variables with scheduled caste people. This chapter will be able to highlight the actual status of literacy and the occupational structure of scheduled caste people.

Study area: Birbhum district of West Bengal was named after the dialect of the people living in the area. The word 'bir' means forest and 'bhum' means land, the name of Birbhum district is formed by matching these two words. The district is located in the central-western part of the state of West Bengal, bounded by Santal Pargana (Jharkhand state) to the north and west, Murshidabad district to the east and Burdwan (present-day East and West Burdwan) districts to the south (SERIES-20 PART XII-A - Westbengal.census.gov.in, 2011). The geographical extent of this district is between 23° 40′ 0″ north and 24° 20′ 0″ north latitude and 87° 20′ 0″ east and 88° 0′ 0″ east longitude (*Location Map of Birbhum District, Download Scientific Diagram*, n.d.). The district has a total area of 4545 Square kilometer and is the ninth largest state in terms of area. The major rivers, in this district are Ajoy, Bakreswar, Mayurakshi and Bramhani, Hingla River, Kopai River, whose soft alluvial soil helps in agriculture in the district and Ajoy River, which originates from Chotanagpur plateau in Jharkhand state. The soil of this district is mainly laterite soil with low fertility and forest cover is 3.5 percent. This district has 3 sub divisions, 19 blocks, 18 police stations, 19 Panchayat Samities, 169 Gram Panchayats and 2455 villages. The district has agro-based industries. (SERIES-20 PART XII-A - Westbengal.census.gov.in, 2011)

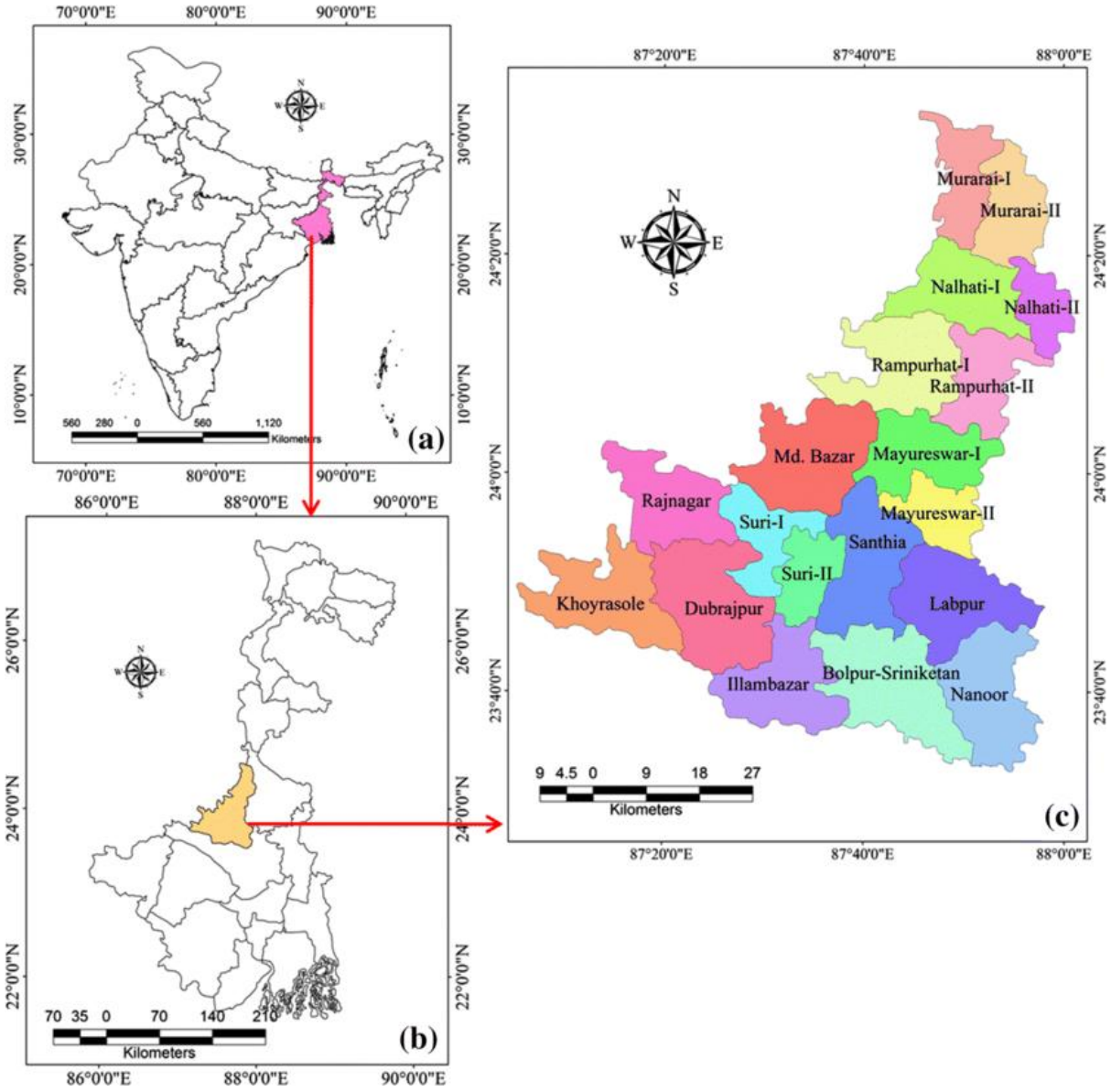

Figure. 1: **Location map of a India, b West Bengal and c study area: Birbhum district**

Source: (*Location Map of a India, B West Bengal and C Birbhum District | Download Scientific Diagram*, n.d.)

State-of-the-Art:

Raghavendra, (2020) According to the research, paper highlight on the literacy and health status of Scheduled Castes in India. It has been mentioned Scheduled castes in India are noted to be socially backward compared to other castes. This paper has collected secondary data and collected health-related data from the National Family Health Survey-2015-2016. The survey depicts the literacy status, sex ratio, different health-related elements of scheduled caste people.

Acharya and Sahoo (2019) According to the research, paper it highlight on the changing trends in literacy among the scheduled caste population in India. This study uses data from India's Census and the National Sample Survey. India has observed an increasing trend in the literacy rate of scheduled castes, but failure in examinations and poor socio-economic status in higher education are the main reasons. Despite various efforts by the central and state governments, the gaps in the proper development of social groups are yet to be filled.

Dhanaraj and Mahambare (2019) According to the research paper, it focuses on the impact of non-agricultural employment on women's joint families in rural India. Studies in 2005–2012 showed adverse effects among young women, especially in families with high social status, with effects mainly in northern India. A reluctance to conform to cultural and traditional norms can be observed among highly educated women. It focuses on education level as well as earnings and job quality.

Roy, et.al. (2018) According to the research paper is on General, scheduled castes and scheduled Tribes women's literacy rates, employment rates, and gender disparities. Census data and secondary data from 2001-2011 have been used for this study.

Vipin and Anamika (2018) According to the research paper, study focuses on the literacy rate of scheduled castes in the state of Haryana, India. This study highlights the importance of literacy in the socio-economic and political development of disadvantaged groups. The study also discusses government programs and schemes for the upliftment of scheduled castes.

Ahmad and Bano (2018) According to the research paper, analyzes the occupational status of scheduled castes and general population in India. Data for this study has been collected from Census of India 2011 and District Census Handbook. This paper points out that the scheduled caste population in marginal areas in India lags far behind in terms of occupational status. Lack of land, illiteracy, lack of skills have been cited as reasons for the occupational backwardness of the scheduled caste population. Scheduled Caste people also work for low wages due to unemployment, poverty, landless and homelessness.

Barman and Chouhan (2017) According to the research paper, focuses on the literacy and gender inequality of the scheduled caste population in the state of West Bengal in India. According to research data, the literacy rate is 73.56%, the male literacy rate is 80.67% and the female literacy rate is 58.04%. This study uses a standard score (z-score related to usage) and maps and cartographic methods with the help of GIS software.

Roy and Mondal (2015) According to the research paper, it highlights the population of scheduled tribes, focusing on male-headed households, gender ratio, dependence on agriculture and sericulture, economic development and economic challenges, banking services and socio-economic conditions. The data for this study was collected through random sampling. For this study, data were collected from 90 households using a 2015 questionnaire.

Goswami, (2014) According to the research paper, it examines the occupational size and spatial distribution of the Scheduled Caste population in the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam, India. The study noted that the people of the scheduled castes are mainly engaged in non-agricultural occupations and emphasize social isolation.

Lahkar and Datta, (2013) According to the research paper, caste based social system is discussed as a problem of Indian social structure. The study refers to the people of Kaibarta scheduled caste of Assam state. The educational and professional status of this community is discussed in this paper.

Chauhan, (2013) This paper focuses on the working caste population in the formal sector of Malda district, West Bengal, India, and the impact of education on marriage, birth rate, death rate, migration and labor market participation, demographic dynamics, literacy and academic performance.

Khatun, (2013) According to the research paper, highlight on the literacy rate of the scheduled castes of India in relation to the literacy of the general population. The study noted that between 1961to 2001 the rate of primary education increased significantly. Females have significantly lower educational attainment than males of Scheduled Castes. Analysis of the educational situation since 1911, British era and post-independence efforts based on research data and assesses the level of education of scheduled castes of the state of Uttar Pradesh in primary education. Apart from this, differences in literacy between scheduled castes and social groups are noted.

Chakraborty and Chakraborty (2009) According to the research paper highlight on the employment rate, literacy rate, low wages, and home-based work of women in West Bengal. This study uses a probit model and primary data.

Lerche, (2009) The research paper highlights the increased employment of women, mainly in the agricultural sector. Lack of higher education for women, gender disparity, and pay structure disparity can be observed even in the present time. Although education is the main factor in the participation of women in the non-agricultural sector, it is not reflected in all cases. Emphasizes rural women's employment opportunities and wages.

Sedwal and Kamat (2008) The research paper examines the issue of school access and equity for people belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and examines the issues, including addressing the issues and policy formulation.

Chauhan, (2008) According to research paper that analyzes the policy of reservation for lower castes in India, This paper mentions factors relevant to low school enrollment and completion rates, including drop out. The paper also highlights social, educational and political issues related to the policy of conservation and suggests that conservation should be based on economic criteria rather than ethnic considerations.

Goswami, (2005) According to the research paper, the socio-economic and occupational patterns and the spatial distribution of the scheduled castes in India. The scheduled caste population of the Indian state of Assam accounts for 6.16% of the total population and is socially disadvantaged. This paper discusses the occupational patterns and spatial distribution of the scheduled caste population in a socio-economic context.

Hill, (2001) According to the research paper, the resource-based microcredit movement makes a special contribution to the development of citizens working in the informal sector in developing countries like India. This policy framework mentions human behavior and economic development. The Self-employment Women's Association in India highlight on the careers of workers in the informal sector in poor countries.

Chatterjee, (1991) According to the research paper highlights the issues of poverty, inequality and agricultural labor of migrant workers in Birbhum district. Apart from this, malnutrition, unemployment, low wages, and land inequality have been mentioned in the district. In this district, 41 percent of scheduled caste and tribal people work as agricultural laborers.

Objective of the investigation and motivation: Major objectives of the study are follows:-

1. To study the literacy status of scheduled castes population in study area.
2. To examine the occupational structure of scheduled castes population in study area.
3. To evaluate the relationship between literacy with occupation, income, number of birth, monthly income, monthly expenditure, health status, and social mobility.
4. To assess the relationship of age group, literacy level, income category and level, number of birth, family size, family structure, monthly income, monthly expenditure, health status, and social mobility with occupation.
5. To examine the relationship of literacy status with age group, occupation, and income.
6. To identify the factors influencing the literacy level of scheduled castes.
7. Suggestion on improving the literacy and employment prospects of scheduled castes.

Research Hypothesis: The researcher in this study has made the following hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H0):-

1. There is no significant relationship between literacy and gender, age group, place of residence, marital status, caste discrimination, monthly income, monthly expenditure, assets, wage structure, wage rate, daily working duration.
2. There is no significant relationship between occupation and literacy, gender, place of residence, marital status, and caste discrimination.
3. There is no significant relationship between literacy and number of birth, household size, household structure, type of work, mode of payment, and place of destination.
4. There is no significant relationship between occupation and health status and social mobility.
5. There is no significant relationship between age group and caste discrimination.
6. There is no significant relationship between marital status and literacy.
7. There is no significant relationship between age and income

Research Design and Methodology: The researcher's study will be based on Descriptive Research design, whereby the researcher aims to describe more elaborately and extensively the important points of the area and its elements. This study will use quantitative method to get a broad understanding of the literacy level and occupational structure of the Scheduled Caste population of Birbhum district.

a. Tentative chapter Plan: The present study is organized in Seven Chapters.

Introduction

Chapter-I: **Geographical Environment.**

Chapter-II: **Population growth, distribution and composition.**

Chapter-III: **Measurement of socio-economic attributes of scheduled caste population**.

Chapter-IV: **Spatio-temporal analysis of literacy.**

Chapter-V: **Comparative analysis of literacy and Occupational structure.**

Chapter-VI: **Government initiatives and plan implementation for scheduled caste population**.

Chapter-VII: **planning for development of scheduled castes literacy and occupational structure.**

Conclusion
Bibliography
Appendix

Sources of data and Tools to be used in Collection of Data:

Source of data: The present study is based on primary and secondary Data.

a) **Primary Data:** Data can be obtained from household Survey through a questionnaire.

b) **Secondary Data:** Data can be obtained from secondary sources like government reports (Census of India, District Statistical Handbook, Historical Records, Books, Reports, Articles, Journals, and Documents from various sources).

Sampling technique: A simple random sampling approach will be used to ensure data will be collected from the scheduled caste population in different villages of the district.

Sample Size: The sample size depends on what is required for the study. The sample size for this study was 10%. A suitable sample will be determined by considering the variation in districts. The sample will be drawn from the scheduled caste population, which balances statistical significance and practical feasibility.

Tools and techniques Data Collection:

Quantitative Data: conduct a survey to collect quantitative data on the place of residence, social mobility, age group, marital status, literacy level, type and status of occupation, income category, order of birth, household size, household system, type of house, caste-based discrimination, monthly expenditure, health status, working hours, social mobility, payment method, expectations for the future, assets, particularly focusing on the scheduled castes.

Analysis of data: Appropriate statistical tools will be used to analyze the results and properly interpret them at the end of the study.

A) **Descriptive analysis:** Graphical representation of data through Mean, Median, Mode, and Standard deviation charts, graphs and tables.

B) **Inferential analysis**:

Z-tests: Age group, marital status, order of birth, literacy levels, types and status of occupation, monthly income, monthly expenditure, working hours, household size, household system, type of house, health status, social mobility.

Significance of the study: The study will help in understanding the literacy and occupational structure problems of the Scheduled Caste population in Birbhum district. Development of a developing country like India requires the full participation of the scheduled caste population with knowledge, skills, and confidence. Education is one of the most important factors in the empowerment of scheduled castes. The Scheduled castes are far behind in terms of education and employment compared with other communities in India. The research will help in creating awareness about the literacy and occupational structure needs of the scheduled castes, especially the education of the scheduled castes, which will enhance the progress of the country. This study will highlight the literacy and occupational structure problems of scheduled castes in Birbhum district and help the concerned authorities to solve the problems. This study will help the government and social workers understand the problems of the scheduled caste population, thereby motivating them to work in the fields of education and employment for scheduled castes.

Its relevance to the present day problem and need to the society: In India, the enrollment and education rates of scheduled caste lag behind those of other sections of society. Scheduled castes in India pre-independence and 75th anniversary of Independence Azadi Ka Amrita Mohotsav, especially for scheduled castes, do not observe any significant change in education rate. According to data from the Government of India and the National Commission for scheduled castes, scheduled caste are among the poorest, most deprived of social status, deprived of quality education, economically vulnerable and politically marginalized groups. Low levels of education are the main factor hindering the development of scheduled castes in Birbhum district, due to which they are deprived of real rights. Due to the low level of education of this category of people, they work in the informal sector, mainly as day laborers in the agricultural sector, resulting in a much lower family income than other communities. Scheduled castes are one of the most vulnerable and exploited sections of society. Scheduled caste people, especially in Birbhum district, are major obstacles to progress in their lives due to a lack of literacy, and occupational structure and jobs in the informal sector.

Contribution to the existing knowledge: As mentioned earlier, the present study was conducted to explore the potential impact on literacy and occupational structure of scheduled caste people in Birbhum district. The data obtained from this survey will focus on geographical aspects such as literacy and employment in the occupational sector of the scheduled castes of the district, as well as social justice, economic justice and political justice of the scheduled castes for the welfare of the backward sections of the society for planners and policy makers. The educational status and socio-economic status of the SC and ST population in Birbhum district of West Bengal is much lower than that of the general caste. (Ghosh, 2019). The scheduled castes of West Bengal are relatively backward in occupational, educational and other fields. There is a difference in education rates of scheduled caste males and females. (Dutta & Bisai 2020). Due to their very low literacy rate, people of scheduled castes people are deprived of constitutional rights, which is a major hindrance to development and will help in formulating appropriate policies. The main source of the livelihood for the Scheduled Castes is agriculture and sericulture.

These livelihoods are very important and critical to their survival (Roy & Mondal, 2015). The present research work will be the first of its kind. So, we need more research to find out the real problems facing this population. Through the data obtained from this survey, the socio-economic status, lack of own land, educational status, work participation rate, employment status, occupational structure, formal and informal sector work problems of the scheduled caste people of Birbhum district have been identified.

Future work: Current studies have shown an impact on education, health, occupation, income, old age pension, social security, family status, social status of scheduled castes and tribes, women's empowerment. For an example, if scheduled caste family is educationally, economically weak, lacks suitable employment and income level is low, then the effects of education as well as health among the children of the family will be observed, but economic weakness will be more visible. Major topics for future research are to explore the causes of malnutrition and early marriage among scheduled caste women in Birbhum district, to conduct a study on the impact of education on decision-making tendencies of women in rural areas of Birbhum district. To do, some such reports have been published in previous studies. In the light of the present study, future researchers will come up with newer research.

1. A study may also be conducted to determine social security and health rights for migrant workers in Birbhum district.
2. A study may also be conducted to determine status of female employment of Birbhum.
3. A study may also be conducted to determine occupational and health conditions of rural working women of Birbhum.
4. A study may also be conducted to determine the relationship between Health status according to age, education, occupation, and income.

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